**SOCIAL STUDIES COMPETENCIES**

**6/29/11**

**INVESTIGATE**

*Ask a question, formulate a thesis, design an appropriate research project, and gather the information necessary to complete the inquiry.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Demonstrate curiosity about historical events
    - Ask and answer (as possible) questions about a document or artifact in an effort to establish authorship, authority, credibility, validity, and completeness
    - Select from and use a variety of appropriate technologies to collect, analyze, record, and display evidence
    - Develop and defend a thesis, explain the reasons behind it, and defend or alter the theses based on new information or alternative interpretations
    - Make and defend choices about which sources to consult, which to believe, and which to ignore, in the course of a research project
    - Organize information collected, to facilitate perceiving patterns and, therefore, drawing conclusions
    - Develop firm conclusions only after consulting an appropriate range and number of sources
    - Identify the basic information needed to understand an important contemporary issues (e.g., the Arab Spring, the future of nuclear power), and seek information to better understand those issues
    - Draft, test, and refine a thesis over the course of a research project
    - Evaluate the validity, reliability, usefulness, and timeliness of sources
    - Locate valid, useful, and up-to-date references to support inquiry
    - Demonstrate proficient library, computer, and mathematical skills in gathering and analyzing information
    - Trace the evolution of American values, beliefs, and institutions, honestly assessing the challenges that we have met and the success with which we have addressed them

**DEVELOP MODELS, INTERPRETATIONS & EXPLANATIONS**

*Analyze sources, develop powerful models, and develop insightful conclusions about historical events, within the context of our complex, interdependent world.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Organize quantitative information in ways that facilitate analysis and interpretation (e.g. in charts, graphs, timelines)
    - Develop and use models, including charts, graphs, maps, and illustrations, to clarify, illuminate, and/or make sense of historical, economic, or current-events situations
    - Critique models, indentifying their usefulness and limitations in representing complex social events and relationships
    - Connect single historical and economic events to the broader context of complex human and economic systems
    - Describe complex societal issues, both historical and current-day, from a systems point of view, highlighting how influences on one part of the system are likely to influence other parts of the system (e.g. war in one nation leading to an international response and refugee movement, or changes in gas prices having worldwide impact)
    - Identify the usefulness and limitations of using an understanding of history to explain current world events or solve current world problems
    - Identify alternative historical or economic theories, making and defending decisions on which is best in a given context
    - Integrate new information and ideas into existing mental frameworks, making adjustments to understanding, as required
    - Explain the ethical challenges posed by historical and current events, then make and defend judgments about the best courses of action
    - Acknowledge and explain controversies within the historical, economic, and/or political science communities, demonstrating an understanding that these disciplines advance through ongoing debate, information gathering, and re-interpretation
    - Analyze cause and effect in their broadest senses, attending to distant or subtle causes and distant or unexpected effects
    - Seek new evidence, or explain what additional evidence would be require, to confirm theories based in incomplete evidence
    - Synthesize multiple pieces of evidence and multiple theories to arrive at defensible conclusions
    - Account for the disparities in what nations say and the ways their people live (e.g. the US Bill of Rights and evolving roles of minorities in American society, the grand proclamations of some dictators and the poverty of their people)

**CONSTRUCT SOUND ARGUMENTS**

*Draw and defend conclusions about historical, economic, and current-day events, based in logical thinking and powerful and sufficient and appropriate evidence.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Distinguish the conclusions drawn from the interpretation of documents and artifacts from the information contained in, or suggested by, them
    - Differentiate what a document says from what it implies, and draw conclusions based on an understanding of the difference
    - Identify and explain the limitations to the conclusions that can be drawn from documents and artifacts
    - Locate valid, useful, and up-to-date references to support research and inform the development of conclusions
    - Seek and interpret primary sources to develop and support a position on key issues, rather than accepting only the conclusions given by others in secondary and tertiary sources
    - Identify historical or economic concepts that must be applied in order to fully interpret world events, explaining the information and analysis that underlie the interpretation

**QUESTION and CRITIQUE CLAIMS**

*Question and critique the work of other social scientists (including classmates) and lay people, identifying possible flaws or errors in their procedures, analysis, or application of historical, economic, geographic, or political science ideas.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Critique research presented by others, analyzing whether evidence and historical/economic thinking support proposed explanations
    - Identify evidence or schools of interpretation that could be used to challenge others’ conclusions, evaluating whether those conclusions are valid
    - Recognize flaws in historical or economic claims, such as overgeneralizations from limited information, a failure to consider conflicting information or competing theories, and bias on the part of the researcher
    - Offer and defend alternative interpretations of historical events
    - Identify and critique the theories, concepts, and assumptions that silently underlie the interpretations that historians present
    - Compare various historical or economic theories, giving clear and accurate reasons, based on evidence and its interpretation, for believing that one is more powerful than the other
    - Evaluate a historical source for its validity, reliability, authority, completeness, and usefulness credibility
    - Apply principles used to evaluate historical sources to the evaluation of modern sources of information, including web sites, advertisements, news casts, and political announcements
    - Critically evaluate news accounts presented in the popular media, asking questions about the evidence provided, the logic used in framing the argument and the influence of unspoken perspectives and biases
    - Evaluate explanations offered by others, by examining and comparing evidence, pointing out statements that go beyond evidence, and suggesting alternative explanations.
    - Critique the writings of others (both historical documents and current-day pieces), making explicit efforts to detect bias, the distortion of the facts, and propaganda by omission, suppression, or invention of “facts.”
    - Explain how the questions historians ask, the reasons they ask them, the information they gather, and the perspectives they bring to their work all influence the conclusions they draw

**INNOVATE AND ADAPT**

*Develop novel ideas and approaches to historical and economic inquiry, and respond to expected and unexpected challenges.*

* Emerging competency is revealed when students:
* See, interpret, and draw connections between events in a new way
* Find a more efficient or effective way to investigate
* Refocus a broad or ill-defined question upon independent realization or feedback from others
  + - Respond thoughtfully and effectively to questions about possible errors or alternative conclusions
    - Use conclusions to confirm or refute the original theses, defending reasoning
    - Apply inferences and predictions gained from the sources to ask and answer new questions
    - Revise ideas after a critical review of new information or alternative interpretations
    - Respond appropriately to questions and concerns raised by others, adjusting conclusions as required

**WORK STRATEGICALLY**

*Make and act on deliberate choices about what to do, when and how to do it, and how best to negotiate challenges along the way.*

* Emerging competency is revealed when students:
* Develop an research “plan of action” that is likely to yield the information required, to answer a worthy question
* Predict likely challenges or errors and make adjustments to avoid or overcome them
* Consider and explain various possible paths to achieving a goal, defending the choice of which path to pursue
* Identify and prioritize questions to answer, steps to take, resources to consult
* Rethink approaches based on new information gained
* Use time and resources effectively
* Create and use opportunities to build upon personal strengths and minimize weaknesses in order to achieve goals
* Develop, implement, and adjust processes and procedures that enhance
* Develop and enhance relationships that foster productiveness
* Extend techniques that work well in one area to a new area, to increase productivity
* Identify new learning that is required and develop an effective plan to gain it

**COMMUNICATE**

*Communicate historical and economic information and ideas clearly and effectively, adjusting to address different audiences and purposes.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Use accurate historic and economic language to communicate information and ideas clearly
    - Communicate and defend a historical, economic, or other social-science-based argument
    - Defend historical and economic conclusions persuasively, providing appropriately detailed evidence, organizing information and ideas clearly and logically, and drawing defensible conclusions
    - Base conclusions on a solid grasp of important information, a logical outlook, and a critical awareness of the theories of others
    - Employ a variety of media for sharing information and ideas, including written prose, oral presentations, interactive discussions, visual media, and digital media
    - Choose structures for communication based on the purpose of that communication (e.g. a formal research paper to share historical findings, an editorial to share and defend an opinion on a key issue, an illustrated oral presentation to persuade an audience to take action on an issue)
    - Adjust vocabulary, emphasis, and level of detail to address the knowledge-level, interests, and openness of various audiences
    - Share results of an investigation in sufficient detail so that the information and ideas it presents may be combined with information ideas from other investigations, to yield more powerful conclusions
    - Respond to questions and challenges, defending the historical/ economic thinking that resulted in conclusions or adjusting that thinking to reflect new ideas
    - Engage in historical/economic discourse, building both personal and shared understanding
    - Create and explain charts, graphs, maps, and other visual representations to illustrate processes, connections, and relationships

**CONTRIBUTE**

*Work effectively as an individual, a member of a team, and a member of society to build communities that support a shared commitment to excellence in inquiry, analysis, interpretation, and communication; and to build a better society.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Balance independence and teamwork
    - Make sound decisions about when to hold their ground and when to compromise for the consensus of the group
    - Work effectively with others to carry out research projects, solve problems, and present results effectively
    - Engage in collaborative discussions designed to build and extend historic/economic understanding
    - Provide feedback to peers, based in a shared understanding of historical/economic principles
    - Divide work among team members based on an understanding of the task at hand, as well as an appreciation of the skills, interests, and needs of each team member
    - Identify their own interests, strengths, and weaknesses and balance them when choosing roles in group work
    - Facilitate the work of team members
    - Build a shared sense of responsibility and initiative
    - Assert their own ideas and challenge the ideas of others, while demonstrating respect for the ideas and personalities of others
    - Inspire others to work more intelligently, efficiently, and purposefully
    - Identify and clarify issues where social scientists or citizens need to make ethical and scientific judgments, and explain why these judgments are necessary, what their personal judgment would be in each situation, and what the implications would be for the approach they would take
    - As a consumer and a citizen, make and defend decisions based in a firm understanding of economic information and theories
    - Make and defend informed choices as an individual and as a member of society about such issues as the use of resources and the place of the US in world affairs, reflecting an understanding of local, national, and global issues
    - Recognize that differences such as race, gender, class, and ethnicity can affect the way that people interpret the world
    - Make critical but empathetic decision about when to accept the differing view of another and when to challenge it
    - Develop and abide by laws and rules that engender fairness, and resist those that do not, in appropriate ways
    - Take a stand on human rights by analyzing the disparities between civic values expressed in the United States Constitution, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the founding and controlling documents of other nations
    - Act in ways that reveal an understanding of their role in a complex, interdependent world

**SELF-ASSESS and SELF-ADJUST**

*Pro-actively seek feedback, assess progress and performance all along the way, and make timely and appropriate adjustments, based on gaps between goals and results.*

* + Emerging competency is revealed when students:
    - Accurately assess the quality of the work they produce against classroom and professional standards
    - Take the initiative to get feedback, seek advice, or obtain a different point of view on an historical inquiry in progress
    - Regularly scrutinize the information they are collecting and the conclusions they are reaching, to make sure they are not oversimplifying, ignoring sources that contradict their developing understanding, or falling prey to researcher bias
    - Revise their work to address self-identified weaknesses
    - Recognize a lack of knowledge, skill or understanding on their own and take the initiative to rectify the situation.
    - Stop blaming the textbook, other sources, their peers, or their teacher for problems that they could have diagnosed and addressed.
    - Identify and confront culturally grounded assumptions (based in class, location, education, religion, race, or other elements of culture) that influence their understanding of historical events and modern societies and, as appropriate, challenge them
    - Take responsibility for their own interpretations of the past, and their understanding of connections between the past and the present, by explaining and defending them publicly in a variety of personal and professional contexts